

Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region

Basic Instrument

Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region

Member Nations

Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France for its Pacific Territories (New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna), New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States, Vanuatu

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

To provide an international framework for coordinated conservation efforts for the conservation of cetaceans and their habitats in the Pacific Islands Region, a Memorandum of Understanding (Pacific Cetaceans MoU) was launched on 15 September 2006. The Pacific Cetaceans MoU was negotiated under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The Pacific Cetaceans MoU includes plans to protect and conserve Pacific cetaceans and their habitats, including their migratory corridors.

The Pacific Islands Region encompasses the following states and territories: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Island, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America (American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands), Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna. In many communities, there are significant cultural connections between cetaceans and humans. In much of the Pacific Islands Region, whale and dolphin watching is a growing tourist industry of importance to the region.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Secretariat to the Pacific Cetaceans MoU is articulated in the MoU text. The CMS Secretariat will act as the secretariat to this Memorandum of Understanding. It may use the services of any reliable organization to support the coordination of this Memorandum of Understanding. An organization to coordinate the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding will be determined by consensus of the signatories at their first meeting after consideration of all offers received. The signatories may also consider at their meetings suitable organizations to provide technical advice to support the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding. At this stage the Secretariat contact point for the Pacific Cetaceans MoU remains with the CMS Secretariat.

UNEP / CMS Pacific Cetaceans MoU Secretariat

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Status

There have been three meetings of the Pacific Cetacean MoU, at the second meeting the Parties adopted the “Convention on Migratory Species Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region Whale and Dolphin Action Plan 2009-2012” (Action Plan). The Action Plan recognizes that the survival of many cetacean populations that frequent the waters of the Pacific Islands Region, particularly those that have been severely depleted, can be affected by interactions with fisheries, hunting, pollution, collisions with boats, noise, habitat degradation, climate change, disruption of food chains and irresponsible tourism. The Pacific Cetaceans MoU’s Action Plan addresses these and other threats to cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region.

In March 2012, NOAA Fisheries participated in discussions to revise the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan; and submitted minor comments on the draft revised Action Plan to SPREP. At the third meeting of the Pacific Cetacean MoU, held in September 2012, the body adopted the revised Whale and Dolphin Action Plan 2013-2017, which sets priorities for addressing the threats faced by this species, as well as increasing capacity and public awareness in the region and guides the conservation actions of the Pacific Cetacean MoU in the Pacific Island region over the next five years. Through a correspondence process, the Signatories will identify ways to facilitate implementation of the actions with highest priority, including by linking this regional initiative to processes at the global level for the conservation of migratory species under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

Future Meetings

In September 2015, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme will hold a meeting to discuss the “Year of the Whale” project.

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